

Town of Westford

Representative Town Government Meeting Study Committee



*Westford 2000
A Peaceable Community*

Date: Wednesday, January 9, 2008

Time: 7:00 PM

Place: Millennium, Room 4

Attendees: John Cunningham (Member), Buffie Diercks (Member),
David Murray (Fincom Chair and guest), George Murray (Chair),
Bernie Lynch (Lowell City Manager and guest),
Robert Phillips (Secretary), Bob Price (Member)

Discussions with Bernie Lynch and David Murray

The committee conducted consecutive interviews with Bernie Lynch and David Murray asking their opinions on various issues related to town meetings. Mr. Lynch served in Chelmsford from 1989 to 2005 during which the town moved from open town meeting to representative town meeting and his own position changed from Executive Secretary to Town Manager. Now, as the City Manager of Lowell, he offered a very interesting and informative perspective on these three different forms of local government. He described the several benefits he felt Chelmsford gained by moving to representative town meeting.

David Murray and the committee discussed the role the finance committee does (and could) play in preparation of the budget (and working with the Town Manager and BoS to that end), communication with the voters, making recommendations on various articles (both financial and non-financial). There was also discussion on the possible advantages of moving the annual town meeting to an earlier date, meeting on a weeknight rather than Saturday, and the effect of requiring a quorum at the special town meeting that now usually occurs each autumn.

Sense of the Committee

Murray asked for the committee members' sense on the issues. All members felt that so far there was no strong case for moving away from open town meeting, notwithstanding Mr. Lynch's support for representative town meeting. There was no consensus on such topics as moving the town meeting date or day, or what other steps might be taken to improve citizen participation.

Report to the Town

The committee discussed its report to the town, which is due soon. There was agreement that Murray should simply write that the committee had met several times and was continuing to work on its charge.

Future Interviews

The committee agreed to reschedule its next meeting to Wednesday February 20th. Members will contact several officials from other towns to see if at least two can attend that meeting: Cunningham to invite Anita Scheipers of Lincoln; Fleckner to invite Al Tosti of Arlington; and Murray to invite Donna VanderClock of Weston.

Minutes

The minutes of the October 30, 2007 and December 4, 2007 were approved unanimously on motions by Price, seconded by Cunningham.

Next meeting

Wednesday, February 20, 2008, 7 to 9 PM, Millennium Room 4.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:20 PM.

Respectfully Submitted by: R. Phillips (draft – January 15, 2008, approved February 20, 2008)